

Jan. 3 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

the World Congress Centre. In his remarks, he referred to Joan Kirner, Premier of Victoria.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in Singapore January 4, 1992

The Prime Minister. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The President and I have had discussions on many wide-ranging topics. I will not go into details. I would invite the President to say a few words, and then you can ask the questions from there.

Mr. President.

The President. Well, thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. And let me just say that it is an honor and a privilege to be the first American President to visit Singapore. I've been moved by your hospitality, the openness of our conversations, and indeed, by the welcome that Barbara and I have received here.

Today I met with President Wee and had two very positive sessions, make that three, with Prime Minister Goh because we just met with the business group that was here, his ministers, our businessmen, and the Prime Minister and myself. We focused on three areas: Expanded growth and opportunity, security engagement, and the development of democracy and freedom in the region.

On trade, I'm pleased to announce that we have agreed in principle to a bilateral investment agreement. This will build on the work we've begun under the trade and investment framework agreement or the TIFA that we concluded last October.

In the security area, the Prime Minister and I discussed America's continuing role in the area. Our security arrangements in this region will take a new form. The access agreement that we have with Singapore is an excellent example of the types of arrangements we would hope to develop to meet the challenges of the post-cold-war world. We've agreed in principle to look at headquartering an element of the 7th Fleet in Singapore, CTF-73. It's a logistics command for surface ships. And it's symbolic

of our commitment to the region and the fact that we intend to stay as long as we are welcome.

Singapore increasingly illustrates the characteristics of a truly successful nation in the modern era and a well-educated electorate, increasingly free to make its political choices felt, with access to information to make informed choices. I recognize that democracy underlies prosperity, and I also recognize that no nation has a monopoly on defining how to put it into effect. But there are universal values of civil, political, human rights that we all can share.

And I'm proud of the progress Singapore and the U.S. have made together, proud of the friendship its people and leaders have shown over the past many years, and proud to know that we have a very bright and prosperous future together.

So, thank you. And now, Mr. Prime Minister, I'm delighted to follow your lead and take whatever questions come my way.

The Prime Minister. Will I be the chairman?

The President. Unless we want to appoint someone else to do it.

The Prime Minister. I'll do it.

Japan-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, there have been reports that East Asia nations want you to moderate your demands for trade liberalization by Japan, fearing that if you don't you may inflame anti-American sentiment and actually endanger U.S. security ties in the region. Have you heard such concerns, and are you worried about a possible backlash that already seems to be building in Japan?

The President. I don't think there's a backlash building. I've read certain reports that address themselves to the question you raise. It is not my intention to do anything

other than to improve and foster a relationship with Japan that we view as very, very important. And I've been very encouraged by statements by Mr. Miyazawa and others in anticipation of this trip.

I might add, we're going there to talk about economic opportunity and jobs; there's no question about that. But we also have other broad areas to discuss. And I would say the security concerns that we talked about today with Prime Minister Goh will be high on the agenda. We'll talk about the world trading system. We'll talk about our need to work together, Japan and the United States, to help countries as they are emerging into the democratic world.

So, we're not going there in a kind of an aggressive mode, and I'm encouraged by the statements that I see coming out of Japan.

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, you've been mentioning along on this trip how things are bad economically at home. And we understand now that you're prepared in your State of the Union to call for renegotiation of the budget agreement to pay for various tax breaks and antirecession measures, such as tax breaks for first-time homebuyers. Is that the case, sir? And do you think things have now gotten bad enough where it's time to renegotiate the budget agreement?

The President. I don't think the time has come, and nor will it come as long as I'm President, to try to do anything other than to hold the line on Federal spending. The American people are very, very clear that the Federal Government spends too much. And the only good thing about the budget agreement is that it does have overall caps on Federal spending. So, it is not my view that we need to break those spending caps.

Q. So, you're not considering in any way renegotiating the budget agreement?

The President. Well, I'm not thinking of renegotiating it in the sense of spending more money or getting out from under the only constraints, the only assurance that the American people have that the Federal Government isn't going to take more out of their pockets. And the budget agreement puts caps on spending, and I am for constraining the growth of Federal spending.

And it gets to deficits. And one way to be sure that you don't have a recovery, and I think we will have one, one way to be sure you don't is to indicate that you're going to send Government spending through the roof. And that would put long-term interest rates through the roof. And that would be bad for the whole world trading system, and it would be bad for the taxpayers in our country.

Relocation of Command Task Force

Q. Mr. President, a question for both of you, please: Yesterday U.S. officials left the impression that the transfer of CTF-73 to Singapore was a done deal. Is it a done deal this morning?

The Prime Minister. Is it already a done deal?

Q. Yes. I mean did you sign on the transfer?

The Prime Minister. No. The President and I discussed the possibility of their transferring the Command Task Force from Subic Bay to Singapore. We have agreed in principle. We welcome the presence of America in terms of security in this area. And so long as the access of Singapore is within the memorandum of understanding which we have signed some time ago, the presence will be welcome. So, the details will be looked into by our Secretary of Ministry's departments.

The President. I'm referring to the Prime Minister here to orchestrate this, but go ahead.

Myanmar and Vietnam

Q. There has been information that the United States is about to lift the trade embargo on Cambodia. Will the United States also consider similar moves to other Southeast Asian countries, especially Myanmar and Vietnam? Thank you.

The President. Well, we want to see more progress in Burma, Myanmar, before—I think it's a little premature to talk about that. Vietnam, similarly, the United States has an overriding, compelling desire to have total assurance that we know the fate of every American involved in the conflict with Vietnam. So, it is a little premature to answer in the affirmative regarding Viet-

nam here and way premature in terms of Burma, Myanmar.

Trading Blocs

Q. Mr. President, the United States has consistently opposed the East Asia economic caucus proposed by Malaysia. What will it take to change your mind?

The President. Well, we've had an opportunity to discuss that here. We understand Singapore's position fully. What we want to do is be sure that we don't look like we are in favor of dividing the world up into mutually exclusive trading blocs. And thus, I took a lot of time in Australia and had an opportunity here to give our view to the Prime Minister and his colleagues on NAFTA, the North American free trade agreement, to make sure, to the best of my ability, that our friends in Asia understand that we are not trying to divide the world up into trading blocs.

Our view has been, possibly the answer better lies in using APEC, an expanded role for that, perhaps. So, we are listening in terms of the Singapore view on this one, but I think the overriding point is we don't want to do something that perhaps accidentally does that which Singapore doesn't want, what the United States doesn't want, and divide the world into mutually exclusive trading blocs.

Myanmar

Q. Mr. President, there is a clear difference of view between the United States and ASEAN towards the approach to be taken towards Myanmar. Have you discussed this subject at all with the Prime Minister?

The President. This didn't come up today, and we'll have some more time if the Prime Minister wants to raise it. Our view is quite well-known.

Asia-U.S. Trade

Q. Some Asian businessmen and some Asian politicians, too, have criticized American businessmen for not being aggressive enough. They say Americans complain so much about trade barriers, unfair trade practices, but they say that the old American can-do, the old American good salesman, for example, that's just not true any

more. How do you feel about that? Is some of this criticism justified, and will you be talking to these businessmen who are with you?

The President. Well, perhaps some is, but I'll tell you something, we have a bunch of business leaders with us who represent not just their own companies and the successes that they've had, nor do they only represent those who have successfully dealt in Asia, but they also represent some of the largest trade organizations, Chamber of Commerce, NMA, National Manufacturers; the smaller business outfits, NFIB, the National Federation of Independent Business; and others, too, President's Export Council. We've had vigorous discussions, they have, and the Prime Minister made this possible, with the top commercial ministers here and others about just that point. The Prime Minister says to me, "Hey, come on over, but you've got to be aware of what the market's like here. You've got to do better."

And everybody in our country would say that. But we say, "Yes, we'll do better, and yes, we think there's opportunity, and let's work together to make these." But also we want access and cutting down of barriers so we can be here.

But I think there's some fairness to that in some areas. Singapore, it's been pretty vigorous, I think, in a two-way street.

Is that responsive?

Q. Yes. I was thinking about Korea. They've often criticized Americans, and the Japanese too, for not being aggressive enough.

The President. Yes. Well, I think most American businessmen would say we've got to do better in trying to adapt to foreign markets. So, that's part of it. The other part of it is, hey, we want full access to markets. And so, it's not mutually exclusive. But our message is: The more access we have, the more we can invest, the more that means, eventually means, for jobs in our country. So, I think it's a two-way street.

But our message is going to be listening to where we're not doing it right. These business people are smart. They'll take the message back to their colleagues through these vast organizations and say, "Here's what we need to do now to get smaller and other businesses doing better in the United

States by having investment and trade abroad.” So, that’s the approach we’ve been taking.

U.S. Military Presence in the Pacific

Q. Mr. President, I’d like to ask you one question. Do you see any political reasons to keep the strong military presence of the U.S.A. in this part of the world after the breakup of the Soviet Union?

The President. We see less—because of the hostility that existed, cold war hostility—we see less imminent threat. But who knows in this changing world where the security threats will come to the freedom of small ASEAN countries, for example. And what we will do is preserve a certain security presence.

But I think it’s fair to say that as the world has changed dramatically, as the cold war is over, the threat that existed between the Soviet Union and the United States is certainly way, way, way down. And I think our friends in Asia see it that way. But I think everyone recognizes that there can be untoward happenings. We saw one just a year ago in the Persian Gulf that required a mobility and a presence eventually in the Gulf by the United States.

So, we are not in a war frame of mind. We’re in a peace frame of mind, but we’re keeping our eyes open. And there are certain security considerations that ASEAN countries agree with us exists, and we’ll just act accordingly.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, if I could bring you back to an earlier question.

The President. He’s got one for the Prime Minister. Then let me come over there, sir, if you would.

Relocation of Command Task Force

Q. I’d like to bring you back to the earlier question about the bases here in Singapore since there had been this expectation of agreement and there now seems to be more to talk about. Do you have specific reservations about more American troops coming into this country?

And if I could, Mr. President, bring you back to an earlier question as well, which was the question about defense spending in the U.S. Even though you don’t want to break the budget, are you now going to

cut deeper into defense spending?

The Prime Minister. There was no reservation. What I said was, we have agreed in principle. Of course, the details are not available to us, and the details would have to be discussed between the two sides. And only when you know the details can we then sign an agreement. But this will be within the framework of the memorandum of understanding which we have with the United States. So in principle, I’ve told the President that there’s no problem.

U.S. Military Spending

The President. And my answer to that question is, we are examining all these questions right now. And if, given the changes in the world, there are ways we can save further on defense that has absorbed quite a few cuts, I’d like to be able to recommend that to the American people. But all that, we’re working right now with the Secretary of Defense on these questions. But I would hope that the answer would be in the affirmative. But again, I’d like to have the available time left between now and when I finalize all of this to stay a little loose on it. But we’re looking for saving taxpayers’ money everywhere we can.

Q. Well, if I may, sir, Secretary Cheney says he and Dick Darman have already agreed on a figure.

The President. Well, I don’t know that he said that. I haven’t been told that he’s agreed with Dick Darman. So, I’ll let you know as soon as I hear, maybe.

U.S. Military Presence in the Pacific

Q. Mr. President, a few minutes ago you mentioned the Gulf crisis. Is it one of the objectives of the United States in devising these new, more flexible regional security arrangements to ensure that, if there is in future some kind of regional crisis, that the United States and its friends and allies in this region can cooperate together more effectively to damp down or contain such a problem? And can you give us an idea of the kinds of crises you see emerging in the future?

The President. No, but I think the first answer to your question is, yes, I think there should be an ability to respond flexi-

bly. And that is what any security arrangements would be about. They would be very sensitive to the desires, indeed, demands of any host country. But the point I'm trying to make is, as we move out of Subic because the Filipinos want us to, the Philippine Government wanted us to, that does not mean that we're withdrawing, pulling back, and saying we have no responsibilities to our friends in the area.

I'd rather not try to hypothecate as to what kinds of conflicts might emerge in the future. I gave you an ex post facto example of one that was very much on the minds of everybody from just a year ago. And that happens to be over in the Persian Gulf. And I might say I'm very grateful for Singapore's understanding of that; their willingness to, as they did, send medical teams to the area. But I just think it would not be productive to try to foresee a specific flare-up that would require the presence, the kind of presence I'm talking about. I just think that would be—I don't want any prophecy of that nature to be self-fulfilling. We're talking about a much more peaceful world today and an American security presence helping keep it more peaceful. So, I would just not like to go into the second part of your question.

Yes, Jessica [Jessica Lee, USA Today].

Job Creation

Q. Mr. President, you said that the focus of this trip now is jobs, jobs, jobs. When you were campaigning for President in 1988 you promised that you were going to try to create 30 million jobs. I'd like to know how many jobs you estimate you could create between now, let's say, and the fall to help people who are hurting right now in the United States, over the next 6 to 8 months?

The President. I don't know that there's any number that I could put on something of that nature. The question is to numbers of jobs. All I know is the world and certainly the United States, much of the world has gone through some sluggish, difficult economic times. And therefore, what we want to do is to do everything we can through this international trip, through things we can do at home to create jobs in this country. But I don't think I can set a exact num-

ber for you. Some of what we're going to be doing is setting in motion, hopefully, machinery that will result in more American jobs. Just the discussions we had on investment here today could do that.

So, I can't help you on exact numbers, but I can say, yes, I am determined to do everything I can, internationally and domestically, to try to create more jobs. Our unemployment rates there are not satisfactory, 6.9 or whatever the last figure is. Some say, "Well, that's 3 or 4 points lower than the depth of the recession in '82." That doesn't matter to me, because I will repeat what I've said: "For the person out of work, the unemployment is 100 percent." So, we're going to just keep on trying.

Budget Agreement

Q. Back to the budget agreement, sir. Separate from the caps issue is the question of categories and the fact that, as it stands now, you cannot take savings from one category and put it in another. Are you ready to change that part of the agreement so that you could take savings from the defense and put it into domestic issues?

The President. Let me say, frankly, I'd like to put it into the pockets of the American taxpayer if I possibly could because I think that's what is needed. Maybe it would be nice to do something about the deficit, and maybe it would be nice to do certain things that can stimulate our economy, and that could call for alterations in the tax system. But I would just leave it right there because I think it is important that we have the overall restraining effect of the budget agreement.

Now, what that means in terms of juggling it around from one account to another, we have to wait and see what the recommendations are out of defense and other areas. Because as you know, if you do change, touch defense, why, that could require some kind of adjustment. But it's a little premature to go beyond that which I said in an interview that has triggered an awful lot of this interest on December 23d, and I don't intend to go beyond that.

But I will simply reiterate my determination not to do anything that is going to reverse the economy and make it worse.

And one thing that would make it worse is if I came out of here, talking about, okay, Katie, bar the door, let's let spending go back out through the roof and remove all the restraints on it. And I'm not going to do that. The American people still feel the deficit is too high. They still feel that they're taxed too much, and they're right.

So, one way to work in good faith with the American people is say I'm going to do my level-best to stand up against these crazy spending schemes that want to go further and make the deficit worse. And I'm not going to do that.

U.S. Role in the Pacific

Q. There's been a lot of talk about how power in this region, particularly, in the future will not be military; it will be economic. And that there is a perception among Asian nations that the United States is a declining economic power and that you have put too much emphasis on this tour as a panacea

to America's economic ills. How do you answer that?

The President. I answer it by referring to able leaders of ASEAN countries who tell me what it is they'd like to see us do to be more active in Asian markets. I answer it by saying we are a Pacific power, and we're going to stay involved in the Pacific. We have disproportionate responsibilities for security around the world. And I think the Prime Minister would probably agree with that, and we are going to keep those commitments. And I'd leave it on a very broad basis like that.

Note: The President's 116th news conference began at 11:40 a.m. in the courtyard at Istana Palace. In the news conference, the following persons were referred to: Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa of Japan and Richard G. Darman, Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the Singapore Lecture Group

January 4, 1992

The President. Thank you, Mr. Minister. To Prime Minister Goh, Senior Minister Lee. I'm delighted to be here, and thank you, sir, for that very kind introduction. Let me take this opportunity to say a few words about these two gentlemen I've just referred to.

Minister Lee, a quarter of a century ago, you led this small island of cultural and ethnic diversity, of limited physical resources, to independence. And then, through your vision and your force of intellect and will, you forged Singapore's nationhood. You stood courageously in a life-and-death struggle against the Communists, and you prevailed. You led your nation and your region in the quest for peace and prosperity. It is my convinced view that future generations will honor the name of Lee Kuan Yew. And as you know well from your visits in my own home in Kennebunkport, Barbara's and mine, I am pleased to know you as

a friend.

Prime Minister Goh, I salute you, sir, for your wisdom, for your vigor in carrying Singapore forward now on its path to the future. I am grateful for the wonderful talks we had this morning, and I pledge America's steadfast friendship as you lead Singapore in facing the challenges of the coming generation. And I'm also pleased that you, like many of your countrymen, came to the United States of America for part of your education. These too are ties that bind us together.

Now, on to the business at hand. It's an honor to deliver this lecture, following such leaders as Brian Mulroney and Helmut Schmidt and Ruud Lubbers, Bob Hawke, Mahathir bin Mohamad, and Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, and such distinguished thinkers as Henry Kissinger and Milton Friedman. Let me acknowledge Professor K.L. Sandhu, director, Institute of Southeast